

Take Steps To Avoid "Traveler's Thrombosis"

(NAPSA)—Everybody knows that traveling by plane, car or bus can be uncomfortable. But many people don't realize that the prolonged inactivity of such trips can trigger a serious health problem called deep vein thrombosis (DVT).

DVT can occur when a person is sedentary for long periods of time. Blood clots can form in veins deep within the body, interfering with blood flow. A clot may then detach from the vein and travel through the bloodstream to the lungs, blocking the oxygen supply. This is called a pulmonary embolism, and it can result in a heart attack or death.

DVT strikes 600,000 people each year, according to the Society of Interventional Radiology. Of those, 6,000 die.

Left untreated, DVT can be fatal. But you can take steps to protect yourself.

"It may be hard to believe, but simple, easy exercises can make a big difference," said Michael Brown, MD, FCAP, a pathologist from Billings, Mont. "You can reduce your chances of developing DVT by taking every opportunity to walk around the aisles of the plane or bus; or by taking a brief break from your drive. If you can't get up and walk around, at least wiggle your toes or stretch your legs while you sit.

Other things you can do to protect yourself include:

- Eating a light meal, and avoiding alcoholic beverages. Adequate food and drink increases circulation.

- Wearing support stockings to increase circulation. This is particularly important for those with a history of swollen legs and ankles.

- Take an aspirin. Aspirin acts as a blood thinner, which helps prevent clots.

Symptoms of DVT include



Avoid DVT

- Move around
- Eat lightly
- Avoid alcohol
- Take aspirin

Source: College of American Pathologists



warmth, tenderness, pain, redness and/or swelling in one leg. See a doctor if you notice a red, swollen or tender vein. DVT can be diagnosed through ultrasound, blood tests and venography, and is treatable with prescription drugs.

DVT usually affects people older than 60, although it can strike at any age. According to the College of American Pathologists, those most at risk for developing the condition are:

- Travelers who must remain seated for long periods of time
- Patients on extended bed rest
- Cancer patients
- People with diabetes and blood disorders
- Individuals who have had a stroke, which led to paralysis in arms or legs
- Patients with pacemakers or catheters
- Women who are pregnant or who have just given birth
- Women who use oral contraceptives or hormone replacement therapy
- Individuals who have suffered trauma or infection to a vein
- Smokers

"Enjoy your travels, and remember to move and stretch during long trips," said Dr. Brown. "It may end up saving your life."